

Latino Elected Officials and the Evolving Latino Electorate in Ohio



Latino Affairs
Commission

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The Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs (“OCHLA”) put forth best efforts in gathering and providing accurate and current information. This report contains data from the latest research available. Upon request, OCHLA will provide any additional information or data available.

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I. Introduction

While the size of the Latino electorate has increased on a national and state level over the last several decades, Latinos remain significantly underrepresented at all levels of government.

Recent research indicates that the composition of the **Latino Electorate** in Ohio is comprised of 199,000 individuals with 42.2 percent of those individuals classifying as Millennials (individuals between the ages of 18 and 33).¹ With 50.4 percent of the Latino population eligible to vote in Ohio², their ability to influence policy has become stronger and essential to this new era of an aggrandized and varied population.

Barriers to entry into public service vary across the nation and among racial groups. **Voices of Latino Elected Officials in Ohio** offers unique insight to the challenges of public service for Latino politicians. In its more than 200-year history, only three Latinos have ever served in Ohio's state legislature.³ Likewise, no Latino has ever been elected to a statewide office.⁴

Notwithstanding the large Latino electorate, **Latino Representation in Government** remains minimal. At the federal and state levels, Latinos comprise only 1.7 percent of all elected officials.⁵

Why Inclusion Matters: The underrepresentation of Latinos affects all Ohioans because it directly affects the composition and political atmosphere of the state. Additionally, the increasing size of the Latino electorate population could potentially develop into a strong political influence over public policy.

Overall, this report explores the different factors and challenges affecting the Latino electorate, and its representation at every level of government, and seeks to provide education, resources, and possible solutions to developing pathways for appropriate Hispanic representation and the need for such representation.

*** NOTE: The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” are used interchangeably in this report.**

¹ Lopez, Gustavo and Stepler, Renee. “Latinos in the 2016 Election: Ohio.” *PEW Research Center*. 19 January 2016.
www.pewhispanic.org/fact-sheets/2016-state-election-fact-sheets/latinos-in-the-2016-election-ohio/.

² See FN1.

³ Ohio General Assembly Archives. archives.legislature.state.oh.us

⁴ Ohio Secretary of State, Historical Election Campaigns.

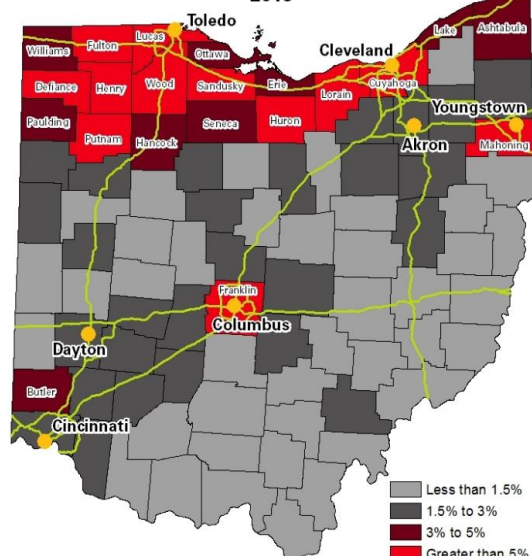
www.sos.state.oh.us/sos/elections/Research/electResultsMain/HistoricalElectionComparisons.aspx.

⁵ Lawless, Jennifer. “Becoming a Candidate.” Cambridge University Press. 16 January 2012.

NALEO Education Fund, 2014 National Directory of Latino Elected Officials.

II. The Latino Electorate

Hispanic Population as Percent of County Population:
2013



Source: Ohio Development Services Agency

racial and ethnic groups, voter turnout rates are generally lower among young adults as compared to older adults.¹⁰ In Ohio, the median age of Latinos is 25, whereas the median age of Ohioans as a whole is 39.¹¹ These numbers are also similar at the national level.¹²

Of the 199,000 eligible Latino voters in Ohio, 42.2 percent classify as Millennials (individuals between the ages of 18 and 33).¹³ Additionally, individuals of Mexican origin represent 41.9 percent of Ohio's Latino electorate, exceeding populations from other Latin American countries. Nevertheless, Ohio's Latino voter population is comprised of 86.7 percent of U.S. born citizens.¹⁴

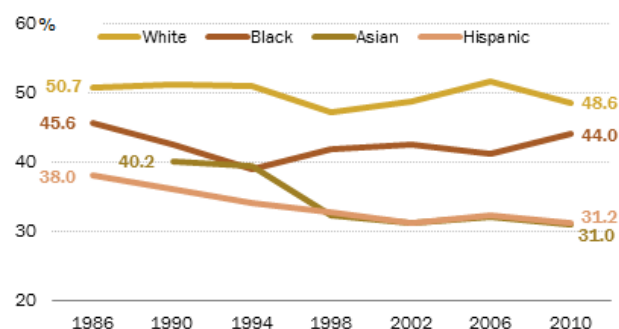
In 2014, Latinos made up 11.3 percent of the United States electorate and 2.3 percent of the Ohio electorate.⁶ Ohio ranks 19th across the nation in its Latino eligible voter population with 199,000 eligible Latinos.⁷ With much of Ohio's Latino population concentrated in northern Ohio and within Ohio's three major cities of Cincinnati, Columbus, and Cleveland⁸, there is a vibrant Latino citizenry, from both rural and urban geographic areas, with varying ideologies and concerns.

However, for many years, political participation in the Latino community has lagged behind other voting groups. According to the Pew Research Center, only 31 percent of Latinos voted during the 2010 midterm election, compared to 49 percent of Caucasians and 44 percent of African Americans.⁹ While there are many factors influencing lower voter participation rates among Latinos, a significant factor is the relative youth of the population.

Across all

Latino Voter Turnout Rates Consistently Below Whites, Blacks in Midterm Elections

% of eligible voters that voted in each off year election



Note: Hispanics are of any race. Whites, blacks and Asians include only non-Hispanics. Data for non-Hispanic Asians were not available in 1986.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the Current Population Survey November Supplements

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⁶ See FN1.

⁷ See FN1.

⁸ Ibid; Ohio Government, 2010 Census of Population and Housing and the Census Bureau's 2013 American Community Survey.

⁹ Gonzalez-Barrera, Ana; Krogstad, Jens; Lopez, Mark; and Patten, Eileen. "Latino Voters and the 2014 Midterm Elections: Geography, Close Races, and Views of Social Issues". *Pew Research Center*. 14 October 2014.

www.pewhispanic.org/2014/10/16/latino-voters-and-the-2014-midterm-elections/.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid; Ohio Government, 2010 Census of Population and Housing and the Census Bureau's 2013 American Community Survey.

¹² Brown, Anna; and Stepler, Renee. "Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2014: Table 9 - Median Age in Years, by Sex, Race and Ethnicity: 2014". *Pew Research Center*. 19 April 2016. www.pewhispanic.org/2016/04/19/statistical-portrait-of-hispanics-in-the-united-states/.

¹³ See FN1.

Contrary to popular belief, immigration is not the number one concern for U.S. Latino voters. According to a PEW Research study, the economy is the number one issue for Latino voters, followed by healthcare.¹⁵ Nonetheless, immigration remains in the top three issue areas for Latino voters. Thus candidates, lawmakers, and various Latino advocacy groups should not disregard the issue of immigration as insignificant to the Latino agenda.

Taking into consideration all of the characteristics of the Ohio Latino voting population (see table), OCHLA recommends that the Latino community and advocacy groups make voter registration and civic engagement a priority in order to achieve adequate representation of Ohio's Latino electorate and population. Ohio's Latino voter population has a strong ability to influence public policy, but its influence will only become significant if the Latino voter population mobilizes to ensure adequate representation.

Characteristics of Eligible Voters in Ohio and the United States, 2014

% of eligible voters (unless otherwise noted)

	U.S.		Ohio	
	All	Hispanics	All	Hispanics
Total population (thousands)	318,857	55,251	11,594	395
Eligible voter population (thousands)	224,963	25,486	8,743	199
Age				
18-29	21.6	32.9	20.4	33.2
30-44	24.0	28.6	23.5	30.8
45-54	17.6	15.9	18.0	15.7
55-64	16.9	11.6	17.8	10.9
65 and older	19.8	11.0	20.4	9.5
Millennial (ages 18-33)	28.2	41.4	26.6	42.2
Gender				
Male	48.4	48.9	48.2	49.4
Female	51.6	51.1	51.8	50.6
Type of citizen				
Citizen by birth	91.4	75.2	97.4	86.7
Naturalized citizen	8.6	24.8	2.6	13.3
Language				
Speaks only English at home	85.2	31.7	95.4	52.2
Does not speak only English at home	14.8	68.3	4.6	47.8
Speaks Spanish at home	8.5	67.8	1.6	47.4
Educational attainment				
Less than high school graduate	10.9	22.0	10.9	20.1
High school graduate	28.4	29.0	34.1	27.3
Two-year degree/Some college	32.7	33.5	30.9	33.5
Bachelor's degree or more	28.1	15.6	24.1	19.0
Marital status				
Married	49.6	42.5	49.7	40.5
Never married	29.9	40.1	28.7	40.7
Divorced/separated/widowed	20.6	17.4	21.7	18.8
With child younger than 18 in home	23.5	28.7	23.7	31.2
Homeownership rate	66.7	55.2	68.2	53.2
Hispanic origin				
Mexican	-	59.2	-	41.9
Puerto Rican	-	14.1	-	34.2
Cuban	-	4.6	-	2.7
Salvadoran	-	2.6	-	1.8
Dominican	-	3.4	-	2.0
Other	-	16.1	-	17.6
Household income (in 2014 \$)				
Less than \$30,000	20.7	22.8	23.3	28.0
\$30,000-\$49,999	17.2	19.6	18.6	19.5
\$50,000-\$74,999	18.7	20.1	19.9	18.5
\$75,000-\$99,999	14.0	14.4	13.8	12.2
\$100,000 or more	29.5	23.1	24.3	21.8

Note: Eligible voters are citizens ages 18 and older. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. High school graduate includes GEDs or equivalent. Homeownership rate and household income excludes persons living in institutions, college dormitories and other group quarters.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 2014 American Community Survey (1% IPUMS sample)

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

¹⁴ See FN1.

¹⁵ Krogstad, Jens; and Lopez, Mark. "5 Takeaways About the 2014 Latino Vote". *PEW Research Center*. 10 November 2014. www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/11/10/5-takeaways-about-the-2014-latino-vote/.

III. Voices of Latino Elected Officials in Ohio

As new Latino leaders emerge at all levels of government, significant challenges remain. Four current Latino elected officials offer their insight as to the unique challenges of public service, and ways to promote Latino leadership in Ohio.



Kathy Huner (*neé Trejo*) was elected Mayor of Wauseon in November of 2015, and is serving a term that expires in December of 2019. A current preschool teacher and former Wauseon City Councilmember, Mayor Huner also serves on the Wauseon Planning Commission's Revolving Loan Fund and Tax Incentive Review Council. Mayor Huner, a Republican, is Ohio's first Hispanic mayor, and the first female mayor of Wauseon.¹⁶

On being the first Hispanic mayor in Ohio...

"When I was appointed, I knew that I was going to be Wauseon's first female mayor, but I had no idea that I would be the first Hispanic mayor in Ohio. I thought surely there were others who came before me, but surprisingly that was not the case...While most people in the community were supportive of my role, others were not ready for a female mayor...As a Hispanic, and especially as a woman, I feel added pressure to be exceptional in my job...I am honored to say that I was elected Mayor of Wauseon last November, and will serve a four year term."

On being a role model to aspiring Latino leaders...

"Part of my purpose is for women and Latinos to see that they can run for elected office and excel in leadership positions. I understand why many people have a fear of these positions, but we must continue to challenge ourselves and embrace the discomfort...Having confidence in our abilities and the pride to overcome negativity are critical to a successful run for office...It's important to go into the position knowing your agenda. My agenda is to serve Wauseon citizens as best I can, and to ensure that each person has a voice in our community. I love my hometown and am appreciative for the opportunity to help make Wauseon a great place to live, work and raise a family."

¹⁶ City of Wauseon, Mayor's Office. <http://www.cityofwauseon.com/page/mayors-office>



Dan Ramos was elected State Representative in 2010, and is eligible for reelection in November of 2016. Representative Ramos never held public office prior to his 2010 election. A former legislative aide and policy analyst, Representative Ramos has also served as a caseworker for the Lorain County Department of Jobs and Family Services. Representative Ramos is the first Democratic state representative of Hispanic descent to serve in the Ohio legislature.¹⁷

On being a voice for Ohio's Latino community...

"The Latino community in Ohio is often misunderstood because we are not a homogenous group, rather we have different cultures and traditions. Consequently, many elected officials don't understand the complexity of issues facing our community...Because Latinos are not the largest minority in Ohio, their issues are more vulnerable to being overlooked...Often times, I am the only person in the room representing the entire Latino community. When you are the only one in the room, building a coalition starting at nothing is very difficult."

On running for office and the importance of Latino leadership...

"When I first ran for office I felt that I needed to be exceptional, as Latinos don't comprise the majority of my district. I had to do twice as well as others to get noticed in the primary, not just because of my ethnicity, but also because I was in my 20's...We need to encourage more Latinos to run for office, and a college education is key to priming sound candidates. Latino college graduation rates still remain below the state average, and there needs to be more invested in our children's education...There are plenty of ways to become a leader in the community before coming to the legislature. Volunteering on boards and working in the community are important, for example. We also need to talk more about other positions in government that need Latinos such as heads of departments and other appointed roles."



Rick Perales was elected to the Ohio House of Representatives in 2012, and is eligible for reelection in November of 2016. A retired Air Force Commander, Representative Perales has also served as the Mayor of Beavercreek, as a Green County Commissioner, and as the Executive Director of Facilities at the University of Dayton. Representative Perales is the third person of Hispanic descent to be elected to the Ohio House of Representatives.¹⁸

Advice for Latinos considering a run for office...

"Getting involved in politics can be intimidating for people of all backgrounds. I've never felt additional pressure in my work because of my ethnicity, but I think many people who consider running for office ask themselves if 'they have what it takes'. Communities across Ohio are very diverse and more connected than ever before. Ohioans are ready for anyone who will work hard on their behalf and keep their word, regardless of race or ethnicity...If you're wanting to run for office, it is important to be confident and know

¹⁷ Ohio House of Representatives, Dan Ramos. www.ohiohouse.gov/dan-ramos

¹⁸ Ohio House of Representative, Rick Perales. www.ohiohouse.gov/rick-perales

that you can make a difference. Having thick skin is critical, and finding someone who's been there to mentor you through the process is important."

On the importance of mentorship...

"Enlisting the guidance of someone who 'knows the ropes' is critical to a successful campaign and career in public service. I cannot stress enough how important it is to groom our young leaders for these roles. We need to get kids in high school and even sooner to begin thinking about a career in public service. Legislators understand that they won't be in these positions forever, and many of us make it a priority to make ourselves available to those considering a run for office. As a mentor, I make it a priority to support people in their efforts to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to have a successful career in public service."



Dr. Anahi Ortiz was appointed as the Franklin County Coroner in November of 2014, and is eligible for reelection in November of 2016. A New York native, Dr. Ortiz received her medical degree from Downstate Medical College in Brooklyn and completed her residency at St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital in Manhattan.¹⁹ Dr. Ortiz is anticipated to be the first Latina Democratic candidate elected to a countywide office in Franklin County.²⁰

On the challenges of being a Latina elected official in Ohio...

"As a woman and a Latina, there is definitely added pressure to perform well in my role. Additionally, I am small in stature and don't project a big personality, so at events where I am often the minority in both gender and ethnicity, I have to make a conscious effort to be heard and taken seriously...There are so few Latino elected officials in Ohio that it can be difficult to raise up and have a voice that others will take seriously. There have been times that I have raised issues impacting the Latino community, only to be told that our population isn't large enough to address certain concerns right now. If there were more Latino elected officials by my side during these times, I believe people would take us more seriously."

On getting more Latinos to run for office...

"Mentorship is critical to promoting Latino leadership. It's difficult though, because there aren't many Latino elected officials in Ohio who have come before us. I've attended [Latino leadership] courses in other states because I don't know of any in Ohio, but the problem is the courses are always geared toward younger people. It's tough for people like me who are established in their careers and are just now wanting to get into politics...I hope that more people from our community will just 'go for it' and run. We need to use our current elected officials as resources. I am eager for the opportunity to talk with others about running for office."

¹⁹ Franklin County Coroner's Office, About the Coroner. <http://coroner.franklincountyohio.gov/about-us/about-the-coroner>

²⁰ Jarman, Josh & Manning, Allison. "Franklin County's New Coroner is a Pediatrician." *Columbus Dispatch*. November 19, 2014. http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2014/11/18/New_coroner.html

While the experience and insight of the interviewees varies, there is a consensus that mentorship from a seasoned politician is critical to helping newly elected officials understand how to navigate the political arena. The elected officials interviewed for this portion of the report have all offered to share their insight with individuals contemplating a run for public office.



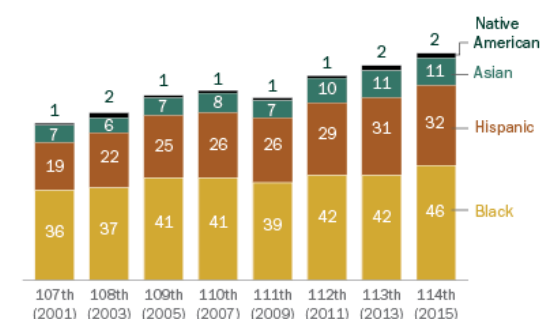
IV. Latino Representation in Government

Latinos comprise nearly 17 percent of the U.S. population²¹, yet Latinos remain vastly underrepresented at all levels of government. According to the National Association of Latino Elected Officials, there are 334 Hispanic/Latino elected officials serving on the federal and state level²², which account for 1.7 percent of all federal and state elected positions.²³

Federal Government

Growing Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Congress

Number of House and Senate members by race and ethnicity



Note: The data do not include nonvoting delegates or commissioners. Figures represent the makeup of Congress on the first day of the session. Asian includes Pacific Islanders.

Source: CQ Roll Call, Congressional Research Service, Brookings Institution

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Diversity among congressional members has been on the rise for many years. Nearly 1 in 5 members of the U.S. House and Senate are a racial or ethnic minority, making America's current Congress the most diverse in history.²⁴ Still, Congress remains disproportionately Caucasian to the U.S. population. Over the past decade, the Latino community has seen the largest growth in political representation on a federal level. In 2001 there were 19 Latino members of Congress and by 2015 there were 32 Latino members.²⁵

Of the 535 current members of Congress, 6 percent identify as Hispanic/Latino.²⁶ Three Latinos currently serve in the U.S. Senate and 29 Latinos serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.²⁷ Only six Hispanics have ever served in the U.S. Senate, and no woman of Hispanic heritage has ever been appointed or elected to serve in the U.S. Senate.²⁸ A

total of 69 Latinos have served in the U.S. House of Representatives, with the majority hailing from the Western and Southwestern area of the country. Ohio has never elected a Latino to the U.S. House or Senate.²⁹

The increase in Latino, and other minority representation, has largely come from membership changes in the U.S. House, specifically among newly elected Democrats. Approximately 22 percent of Hispanics in the U.S. are now represented by a Hispanic House member. In contrast, 35 percent of African Americans, 12

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 Population Estimates.

http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tables/services/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=PEP_2013_PEPASR6H&prodType=table

²² NALEO Education Fund, 2014 National Directory of Latino Elected Officials.

https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/naleo/pages/171/attachments/original/1440570181/2015_National_Directory_of_Latino_Elected_Officials.pdf?1440570181

²³ See FN3.

²⁴ Krogstad, Jens Manuel. "114th Congress is most diverse ever." *Pew Research Center*. 12 January 2015.

www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/01/12/114th-congress-is-most-diverse-ever/.

²⁵ See FN19.

²⁶ See FN19.

²⁷ Ibid; NALEO Education Fund, 2014 National Directory of Latino Elected Officials.

²⁸ United States Senate, Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month.

http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Hispanic_Heritage_Month.htm

²⁹ United States House of Representatives, Hispanic Americans in Congress. <http://history.house.gov/People/Search?filter=11>

percent of Asians and 8 percent of Native Americans are represented by a member of the same racial or ethnic group.

Latinos Serving in the 114th Congress

U.S. House of Representatives

District	Name
AZ-3	Raul Grijalva (D)
AZ-7	Ruben Gallego (D)
CA-29	Tony Cardenas (D)
CA-31	Pete Aguilar (D)
CA-32	Grace Flores Napolitano (D)
CA-34	Xavier Becerra (D)
CA-35	Norma Torres (D)
CA-36	Raul Ruiz (D)
CA-38	Linda Sanchez (D)
CA-40	Lucille Roybal-Allard (D)
CA-46	Loretta Sanchez (D)
CA-51	Juan Vargas (D)
FL-25	Mario Diaz-Balart (R)
FL-26	Carlos Curbelo (R)
FL-27	Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R)
ID-1	Raul Labrador (R)
IL-4	Luis Gutierrez (R)
NJ-8	Albio Sires (D)
NM-1	Michelle Lujan Grisham (D)
NM-3	Ben R. Lujan (D)
NY-7	Nydia Velazquez (D)
NY-15	Jose Serrano (D)
TX-15	Ruben Hinojosa (D)
TX-17	Bill Flores (R)
TX-20	Joaquin Castro (D)
TX-28	Henry Cuellar (D)
TX-34	Filemon Vela (D)
WA-3	Jaime Herrera Beutler (R)
WV-2	Alex Mooney (R)

U.S. Senate

State	Name
FL	Marco Rubio (R)
NJ	Robert Menendez (D)
TX	Ted Cruz (R)

Source: NALEO Educational Fund, 2014 National Directory of Latino Elected Officials

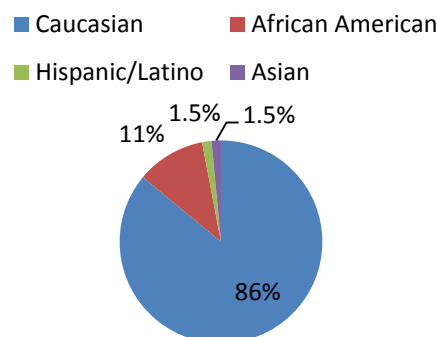
State Government

There are approximately 405,000 Latinos in Ohio, accounting for nearly 4 percent of the state's population.³⁰ No Latino has ever been appointed or elected to serve in any statewide office in Ohio, including the offices of Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Auditor of State, Treasurer of State, Attorney General, or as a justice of the Ohio Supreme Court.³¹

However, two Latinos currently serve in Ohio's 131st General Assembly, comprising 1.5 percent of the state legislature's population.³² But in its more than 200 year history, only three Latinos have ever been appointed or elected to serve in Ohio's state legislature.³³ Those Latinos are the late Honorable John Garcia (R-Toledo), Representative Dan Ramos (D-Lorain), and Representative Rick Perales (R-Beavercreek).

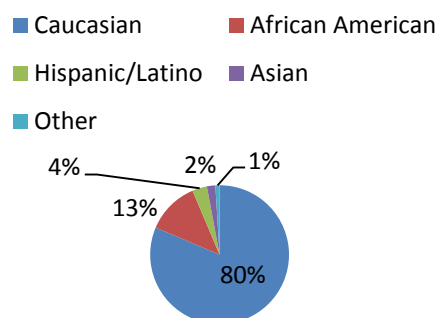
The late Honorable John Garcia, a Republican state representative who served citizens of the greater Toledo area for two terms, was the first person of Hispanic heritage to serve in the Ohio House. Representative Garcia was a supervisor with the Libbey-Owens-Ford Glass Company for over 40 years before being elected to the Ohio House in 1994. During his two terms in office, Representative Garcia authored legislation to strengthen penalties for children in gangs and helped secure state funding to keep the Jeep plant in Toledo.³⁴

Racial/Ethnic Make-up of the 131st General Assembly



Sources: Ohio House of Representatives and Ohio Senate

Racial/Ethnic Make-up of Ohio



Source: U.S. Census

Representative Dan Ramos (D-Lorain) is serving his third term as a state representative in Ohio, making him the longest serving Latino state officeholder in Ohio history. Representative Ramos is the first Hispanic Representative of either caucus in the Ohio legislature to serve in a leadership position, serving as Assistant Minority Whip during the 130th General Assembly. Prior to serving as an elected official, Representative Ramos worked as a legislative aide and senior policy and budget analyst for the Democratic caucus. Representative Ramos is of Puerto Rican descent and is a non-voting commissioner for the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission.³⁵

³⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, Ohio QuickFacts. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/39#headnote-js-b>

³¹ See FN5.

³² Ohio House of Representatives. www.ohiohouse.gov

³³ See FN4.

³⁴ Ohio House of Representatives Journal, March 26, 2003. <http://archives.legislature.state.oh.us/JournalText125/HJ-03-26-03.pdf>

³⁵ Ohio House of Representatives, Dan Ramos. www.ohiohouse.gov/dan-ramos/

Representative Rick Perales (R-Beavercreek), a former mayor and county commissioner, is serving his second term in the Ohio House. Representative Perales retired from the United States Air Force and is currently the sole member of the 131st General Assembly inducted into the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame. Representative Perales has been active in numerous boards in his community, including St. Joseph Children's Treatment Center, Green County Habitat for Humanity and the Victoria Theater. Representative Perales, a Republican, is of Puerto Rican descent and is a non-voting commissioner for the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission.³⁶

No woman of Hispanic heritage has ever been elected or appointed to serve in Ohio's state legislature, and no person of Hispanic heritage has ever served in the Ohio Senate.³⁷

Local Government

There are 938 municipalities and 668 school districts in Ohio, which would theoretically provide Latinos numerous opportunities to become politically engaged at the local level.³⁸ As of June 2015, according to data extracted by the National Association of Latino Elected Officials, there are 15 Latino elected officials in Ohio serving in local government roles and on public school boards.

Latino Local Elected Officials in Ohio - 2015

Name	Title	Municipality/School District	County	Political Affiliation
Kathy Huner	Mayor	City of Wauseon	Fulton	Republican
Anita Lopez	County Auditor	Lucas County	Lucas	Democrat
Irma Celestino	County Treasurer	Sandusky County	Sandusky	Republican
Anahi Ortiz	County Coroner	Franklin County	Franklin	Democrat
Jose Villanueva	Common Pleas Court Judge	Cuyahoga County	Cuyahoga	Democrat
Joel Arredondo	Council President	City of Lorain	Lorain	Democrat
Maria Klemack-McGraw	Councilmember	Grove City	Franklin	Unknown
Maria Walther-Willard	Councilmember	Village of Greenhills	Hamilton	Unknown
Dennis Flores	Councilmember	City of Lorain	Lorain	Democrat
Chris Rodriguez	Councilmember	City of Whitehall	Franklin	Republican
Martin Estrada	Councilmember	City of Wauseon	Fulton	Unknown
Angel Arroyo	Councilmember	City of Lorain	Lorain	Democrat
Bob Vasquez	School Board President	Toledo Public Schools	Lucas	Democrat
Ramona Reyes	School Board Member	Columbus City Schools	Franklin	Democrat
Daniel Minera	School Board Member	Cincinnati Public Schools	Hamilton	Unknown

Source: National Association of Latino Elected Officials

³⁶ Ohio House of Representatives, Rick Perales. <http://www.ohiohouse.gov/rick-perales>

³⁷ Ohio General Assembly Archives. archives.legislature.state.oh.us

³⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, Local Governments and Public School Systems by Type and State. <http://www.census.gov/govs/cog/GovOrgTab03ss.html>

Despite significant underrepresentation of Latinos at the local government level, there are many opportunities for Latinos to impact local politics. The vast majority of Latino officeholders in the United States are elected to local offices.³⁹ Local Latino impact in Ohio is in an ever-increasing direction as the population grows and meets the threshold for influence in municipal elections that reward population concentration. Such impact is evidenced in areas like the City of Lorain, where an estimated 25 percent of the population identifies as Hispanic/Latino.⁴⁰ Lorain City Council boasts three Latino city councilmembers, comprising 25 percent of the entire council – more than any other municipality in Ohio.⁴¹

³⁹ NALEO Education Fund. “2014 National Directory of Latino Elected Officials.” http://www.naleo.org/at_a_glance

⁴⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, Lorain City QuickFacts <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045214/3944856>

⁴¹ City of Lorain, 2016-2017 Members of Lorain City. http://www.cityoflorain.org/city_council/council_members

V. Why Inclusion Matters

The importance of racial and ethnic diversification in government and representation cannot be overstated. A recent study by John D. Griffin establishes that Latino legislators tend to better represent the concerns of their Latino constituency than non-minority counterparts.⁴² This outcome holds true even when accounting for individuals of the same racial/ethnic group with varied socioeconomic statuses and geographies.⁴³ The study also suggests that increased minority representation in government affects policy outcomes.⁴⁴ For example, a study analyzing state budgets over two decades showed that increased African American representation in state legislatures resulted in a greater focus by state government on policy areas that are important to African American elected officials.⁴⁵

Along the same lines, school districts with high minority enrollment rates in legislative districts represented by African Americans have experienced a larger increase in state aid compared to other high minority enrollment districts where African Americans remain underrepresented in the state legislature.⁴⁶ Therefore, it is imperative that the Latino community work towards obtaining adequate representation at all levels of government.

But while members of a minority class are more likely to champion policies that reflect the interests of the underrepresented groups, the advancement of minority interests by like-minded members of the majority group should not be disregarded. Many non-minority elected officials effectively represent minorities in the policy process as well. These majority group members do so by effectively reaching out to their Latino constituents through public events and town halls in order to initiate dialogue regarding their concerns. Majority group members that effectively reach out typically tend to engage their Latino constituency within the political and civic domains.

And while inclusivity on the part of Ohio's elected officials and public servants is important in order to create pathways towards adequate representation, it is far more critical to have the Latino community empower its self from within to mobilize its voting electorate. The Latino community and advocacy groups should take into consideration the characteristics of the Latino voting population in order to effectively implement and prioritize voter registration and civic engagement opportunities. It is only through effective efforts by and through the Latino community and advocacy groups that adequate representation of Ohio's Latino electorate and population will be possible.

And even though it is true that the Latino electorate is anticipated to have a large impact on the upcoming 2016 elections, it is likely that Latinos will remain underrepresented among voters in 2016 if voter turnout rates do not improve.⁴⁷ Because the Latino electorate has a strong ability to influence politics, public policy,

⁴² Griffin, John D. "When and why minority legislators matter." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 26 February 2014.

<http://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/race-society/when-why-minority-legislators-matter>

⁴³ See FN43.

⁴⁴ See FN43.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/politics/seminars/ueda_f05.pdf

⁴⁷ Krogstad, Jens Manuel; Lopez, Mark Hugo; Lopez, Gustavo; Passel, Jeffrey S.; and Patten, Eileen. "Millennials Make Up Almost Half of Latino Eligible Voters in 2016: Youth, Naturalizations Drive Number of Hispanic Eligible Voters to Record 27.3 Million." *PEW Research Center*. 19 January 2016. www.pewhispanic.org/2016/01/19/millennials-make-up-almost-half-of-latino-eligible-voters-in-2016/

and social issues, the Latino community and advocacy groups should organize, educate, and charge the Latino community to change the status of Latino underrepresentation.

VI. Conclusion

With the size of the Latino electorate increasing, it is imperative that Latinos obtain adequate representation at all levels of government. The current underrepresentation of our country's largest minority prevents the Latino perspective from being completely understood.

The Ohio Latino Affairs Commission works to increase the representation and civic engagement of Latinos throughout the state. In preparation for the November election, the Commission has launched a 2016 Ohio Latino Vote Campaign, which aims to mobilize the Latino community in Ohio through voter registration and education. The Commission is working with nearly 20 organizations from across the state to promote the campaign, which has a goal to register at least 1,000 individuals before Ohio's voter registration deadline of October 11.

Additionally, the Commission tracks legislation that affects the Latino community and shares appropriate updates and information through electronic media. The Commission also works to educate and collaborate with Ohio's elected and public officials on the needs of the Latino community through district meetings, legislative visit days, town halls, community forums, and more.

Latino Community Reports are part of the Commission's work to fulfill its statutory mandate to advise Ohio's government on issues affecting the Latino community.

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